

What is treason today?

Robert Henderson says that many members of the liberal elite are active or passive traitors

Treason is a famously slippery word, not least for the reason enshrined in the oft-quoted but, because it contains a savage truth, eternally potent rhyme:

*Treason never prospers,
What's the reason?
For if it does
None dare call it treason.*

Yet elusive as it is, treason clearly has an objective reality, a reality, moreover, whose essence is changeless. That quality is betrayal which goes beyond the personal. If a friend betrays you to another friend that is not treason. If a fellow countryman betrays you to an occupying power that is.

As a legal concept, treason has been redrawn during the past millennium. In a dynastic context, where the king is king in executive fact as well as name, treason is the betrayal of the sovereign by a person who owes him allegiance. That betrayal may be through disloyalty or an attempt to harm the person of the monarch (and generally his family). By extension, the same applies to those to whom the monarch's executive power is delegated. Kill the King's man and you attack the king.

But treason in dynastic circumstances was not a straightforward matter of simply plotting against the king or attempting harm to the king's person or doing the same to his representatives. A great noble or courtier close to the king might well lose his head through being deemed to have given "evil counsel" to the monarch, even though that counsel had been accepted and acted upon by the king. The "evil counsellor" would be blamed (and probably executed) to ensure that the monarch was not held to account.

The idea of "evil counsel" had an important effect in English constitutional development and a consequent broadening of the idea of treason. Evil counsellors were generally identified not by the king but by others, most notably Parliament. Thus the practical application of the idea of the

evil counsellor both reinforced the idea that the monarch was not a completely independent agent and created the idea that any man involved in politics owed not merely his formal loyalty to the king (and later the people), but also should take care to act and speak in a way which would not be to the disadvantage of the king and his subjects.

The notion of treason evolved in Europe because monarchs have rarely if ever been able to act indiscriminately in their own interests. Indeed, European monarchs have been remarkably unsuccessful in creating efficient and lasting despotisms. Because of that, their subjects never truly succumbed to politically debilitating ideas such as the divine right of kings. Rather they expected of a king duty as well as self-promotion and satisfaction. The concept of the unjust prince was well developed by 1100 and culminated in the doctrine of tyrannicide developed by John of Salisbury in the 12th Century.

Here is Manegold of Lautenbach writing in the 11th Century:

“No man can make himself emperor or king; a people sets a man over it to the end that he may rule justly, giving to every man his own, aiding good men and coercing bad, in short, that he may give justice to all men. If then he violates the agreement according to which he was chosen, disturbing and confounding the very things which he was meant to put in order, reason dictates that he absolves the people from their obedience, especially when he has himself first broken the faith which bound him and the people together.”¹

For Manegold a people's allegiance to its ruler is a promise to support him in his lawful undertakings and is consequently void in the case of a tyrant. In a sense, a tyrant committed treason by dishonouring the office of monarch and its implied and inherent obligations.

Restraints on the monarch were given formal status by their coronation oaths. In England, Magna Carta (1215) moved matters on to another stage where a monarch was forced to agree to direct constraints on his power. The example of Magna Carta in turn led to the development of the English Parliament, which moved from a petitioning and tax granting body in the 14th century to the point where it practically, if not in theory, usurped the power of the king.

As the power of monarchs waned, the emphasis of who was betrayed gradually moved to the idea that the entire population of a country was an entity in itself and betrayal of that entity amounted to treason. The shift from monarch to people was completed with the advent of the formally democratic state, where, in theory at least, the general population became the sovereign.

Of what does treason consist in the formally democratic nation state? Generally it must be the conscious decision to act in a way which will weaken the integrity of the nation state. Betrayal in the old manner of spying or acting for an enemy in war is still part of that. But the primary treason in the modern formally democratic state is more insidious. It is the abrogation of the sovereignty of the nation state by immersement in larger political entities and through the signing of treaties which restrict the opportunity for national self-determination.

This raises an interesting question, namely can an elected politician commit treason if the treasonable activity is part of an election manifesto or it is put to a referendum? The textbook answer would be that ultimate sovereignty in a formal democracy lies practically and morally, if not always legally, with the electorate. An electorate which elects a party or individual on a

manifesto or votes yes in a referendum is considered to be tacitly granting the policy legitimacy. However, there are strong objections to this interpretation.

The first is that the treasonable activity may be misrepresented by the party or politician. A classic example of this is Britain's entry into what is now the European Union (EU). The British electorate were undeniably deliberately misled by the 1970 Tory manifesto into believing that they were merely joining a free trade area. They were deliberately misled again during the 1975 referendum on Britain's continued membership. They have been deliberately misled consistently in the 25 years since the referendum, being told by every government that British sovereignty is not being lost, when massive amounts have been ceded. That is treason by any meaningful definition that has ever been used in the past.

But what if all the sovereignty which had been ceded to the EU had been done after it was presented honestly to the electorate? Suppose every change had been the subject of a referendum. Suppose those referendums had been conducted with absolute fairness. What then? Here the old idea of "evil counsellors" has utility. In the modern formal democracy, politicians play the role of counsellors. Where their counsel is bad and the results of it disadvantages the people to which they owe their good sense and loyalty, then that might be said to be treasonable. Our representatives owe us their best judgement and courage. If they act in a way which is compromised by considerations other than their honest judgement and that action has results which are treasonable, they are guilty of treason. Not only that, but the representative must be honest about the foreseeable consequences of what they propose. In the representative's special position, treason may be committed through acts of omission as well as commission, through not pointing out consequences.

What are the great particular treasons of our time? They can be defined in terms of what causes damage to the viability of the nation state. In the case of Britain, the most dramatic formal act of damaging the nation state has been our membership of the EU. But that is only one of a number of serious attacks on the British state and people. The permitting of mass immigration is a profound form of treason, for mass immigration is a form of conquest. North America is now dominated by the white man because of a slow accretion of settlements not through sudden and violent conquest. To that treason is linked its sister act, the attempted cultural cleansing of the native population of Britain in general and the English in particular, through the wilful denigration of the native population of this country, the deliberate denial to them of their history in our schools and the suppression of dissent through the power of the state, willingly assisted by segments of the mass media.

To those may be added these others which are patently against our interests:

- Entering into treaties which remove freedom of action from the country, for example those governing membership of the World Trade Organisation.
- The failure to maintain the country's military capacity and the use of what military we have in foreign adventures in which Britain has no natural interest.
- The deliberate refusal to ensure that the country's economic capacity can supply all essential items in time of emergency, in particular the securing of the food supplies.
- The spending of taxpayers' money on foreign peoples.

All these treasons, and those of the preceding paragraphs, apply to a lesser or greater degree throughout the First World.

Our own time has brought a new problem of definition to treason. The elite ideology of the moment is liberal internationalism. This might seem to be a direct challenge to the very idea of treason, for where neither the primacy of the nation nor the authority of a sovereign is recognised, against whom is treason committed? The answer is that for the liberal internationalist, treason is any dissent from his ideology. Treason has put on totalitarian clothes.

Unfortunately, the liberal internationalist propaganda has been so successful that treason has an old-fashioned ring to the modern Briton. It is mocked along with the very idea of patriotism. So long have the British been at peace, so safe does everyday life seem, so ruthlessly have the liberal elite and their educational and media nomenclatura promoted the idea that the time of the nation state is passed, that even naturally patriotic Britons find the idea of treason an uncomfortable one.

That is mortally dangerous because a belief that treason may be committed is vitally important if we wish to maintain our independence. The nation state requires a concept of treason as a foundation of its integrity. We desperately need to understand the nature of treason and act upon it for our own protection.

Note 1: Quoted by AJ and RW Carlyle in *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, Vol. III, p. 164, n1.

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